



Defending the human rights of immigrants and workers since 2002

ulanewhaven.org

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Support for

SB 1177 - One Fair Wage
SB 1178 - Paid Sick Days for All
SB 1180 - Drivers Rights
HB 6859 - Fair Scheduling

My name is John Jairo Lugo. I am testifying today as Community Organizing Director of ULA - Unidad Latina en Acción. ULA is a grassroots organization that defends the human rights of immigrants in Connecticut since 2002. Together with 60 organizations across the state, we are part of Recovery For All, fighting for a better future for poor people, workers, and families.

In 20 years, ULA has assisted thousands of workers who were cheated and abused by employers. We have helped workers recover more than 1 million dollars in unpaid wages. They worked all over the state, in restaurants, hotels, and more.

At Off The Hook restaurant in Westbrook, Marvin earned \$3 per hour and some weeks he earned nothing at all. At The Study Hotel at Yale, a housekeeper was fired after she complained of stolen tips. At Goodfellas Restaurant in New Haven, dozens of servers and dishwashers filed nine different complaints of wage theft between 2007 and 2015.

All of these workers won justice, because we spent months and years fighting lawsuits and boycotting those businesses. But the laws of Connecticut are not on our side. The law allows some employers to pay a misery wage, just 6 dollars and change, to restaurant workers and drivers. Enough is enough. We need one fair wage for all.

I am also testifying as a worker. I worked 5 years as a server in a New Haven cafe called Atticus. I worked 3 years waiting tables in a hotel in upstate New York.

In both jobs, they paid me less than the normal minimum wage, because I earned tips. However, they were breaking the law, because I did work without tips. I had to arrive before the customers arrived, to sweep, mop, set up tables, carry bottles, and do other things. At the hotel, I did all of that, plus mowing the lawn.

At the hotel, the pay was so little that I could not rent an apartment. The hotel put 20 workers in a house. I slept in a little room with 5 other people. I will never forget the misery of that job.

Just last week, a group of workers called me, because their employer reduced their hourly wage from \$14 to \$8 per hour. The employer is a luxury restaurant called Artisan in Southport. Now the workers, who work as busboys, will not earn enough money to pay rent, which is very expensive in that part of Connecticut. Will they end up sleeping in a little room with 5 other people? It's up to you to make a change.

I call on you to make Connecticut a place where the workers who feed us and care for all of us can live with dignity. I urge you to approve SB 1177 - One Fair Wage, SB 1180 - One Fair Wage for Drivers, SB 1178 - Paid Sick Days for All, and HB 6859 - Fair Scheduling.

Thank you.

John Jairo Lugo
New Haven, CT